

Source #1: Funerary Stele of Tembu, 1500-1470 BCE



Brief Description of the Source and/or Background Information:

Archaeologists explore the development of human culture by digging up and studying the artifacts and human remains of ancient civilizations. Interpreting symbols and decoding hieroglyphs (ancient Egyptian writing) are part of the job. This carved stone tablet, called a stele, was made for an ancient Egyptian tomb. Chisels, stone hammers, saws and augers of copper and flint were used to carve the stone tablet. Finally, the objects and figures of the relief were painted. The objects and figures depicted on this stele vary in size and scale. The eyes at the top are shown on a larger scale than any of the other objects or figures. They represent the eyes of Horus, an Egyptian god known for his protective powers. Tembu, the tomb's owner, is the largest of the figures and is seated next to his wife. Tembu's sons appear to be arranged according to their height in the bottom right side of the piece. One of his daughters appears next to the offering table while the other two appear in the bottom left hand side of the stele.

Guiding Questions to Help Analyze the Source:

1. Look carefully at this work of art. Who do you think is depicted here? What makes you say that? What can we determine about ancient Egyptian life just by looking at this work of art?
2. How do the hieroglyphs and symbols depicted on this piece help us to learn more about this family? Support your answer using visual clues.

3. Why do you think the ancient Egyptians created funerary steles? What does this tell them about their religious and funerary beliefs?

How does this source help you understand how historians use objects and artifacts to describe the past?